

## WASHINGTON CRITIC

SUNDAY CAPITAL.



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WASHINGTON, MARCH 16, 1890.

## THE MISSISSIPPI FLOODS.

The resolution adopted by the House of Representatives yesterday, calling on the Secretary of War to know whether the Department was prepared to guard the levees of the Lower Mississippi, and whether that Department or the River Commission had any steamers which could be utilized to save imperiled human lives, but serves to emphasize the failure of the levee system to prevent the overflow of that river and the inundation of the contiguous territory.

The levee system was originally applied to the Mississippi by the French colonists in the first quarter of the last century. It has therefore had a trial of more than one hundred and fifty years. It has been during that long period a constant series of failures, costly alike in life and property.

Levees have been used to protect the country bordering on the Po, Italy's chief river, ever since the Romans occupied that country prior to the founding of Rome. The result is summed up in the American Cyclopaedia in a few words. The territory contiguous to the Po is subject to extensive inundations at no distant intervals, while the bed of the river has been constantly raised by the deposits of silt until the surface is from fifteen to twenty feet higher than the adjacent country.

The engineers in charge of the levee work on the Mississippi have admitted, in their testimony before Congressional committees, that the cost of the "permanent improvement" of the Mississippi River would be twice or three times the amount originally estimated. That amount was \$33,000,000. The total cost would, therefore, be, according to the River Commission itself, somewhere between \$66,000,000 and \$99,000,000. And that vast sum of money would be spent entirely in the interest of navigation. In the words of one of the Commission, it would be "without any reference to overflows whatever."

What enormous additional sums would be required to prevent overflows, to restrain within narrow bounds the great stream which at flood marks, with resistless current toward the Gulf, pouring into the lower reaches of the river a million cubic feet of water every second more than the narrow, restricted mouths of the delta can discharge in the same time—what sums would be required to do this stagger the human imagination.

Yet this is not all. It is considered by the River Commission that the restraining of the Mississippi by levees will make similar levees necessary to restrain its tributaries within their banks. It is a work which, once entered upon and all other plans or methods rejected, can, in the very nature of things, never be finished. The surplus millions of the Treasury would disappear as completely as though cast into the Norwegian maelstrom.

The levee system, as applied to the Father of Waters, is a failure, and must be abandoned.

## NEW LENTEN CUSTOMS.

In several of the large cities of the North it is said that the beginning of Lent is the signal for the departure of numbers of persons to health resorts. The weather has been such this winter that the exodus is larger than ever before. Instead of adhering strictly to the religious observances which the Church enjoins as appropriate for that time, hundreds to whom the advent of the Lenten season means a cessation of social gaiety at home, escape its rigor by basking themselves to the sea side, the Southern mountains or to the Floridian glades.

There are considerations that serve to justify this somewhat new but growing custom. No period in the year is drier in the Eastern States than the month of March. The weather is apt to be throughout of an aggravating character. It is sure to be compositely made up of rain, snow, sleet, fog and warm, debilitating sunshine, following each other in confusing but rapid succession. No other time of the year is so depressing to the sensibilities, so irritating to the temper or so provocative of a lapse from duty. It is possible, therefore, that the new method of using the Lenten season may have a religious and moral value which might not upon a merely superficial view have been anticipated.

The opinion has been for years gaining ground among thoughtful men that if a choice can be allowed between a vacation in August and one in March, the latter is to be wisely preferred. In the heats of summer no one anywhere finds rest. The tourist, the traveler, the social overflow is everywhere. But those who can afford to go now into retirement will find peace and comfort. There are now no overcrowded hotels, no boisterous throngs, no sleepless nights, no distracting mosquitoes. Wherever it is found practicable it might be a good thing to divide one's vacation into two parts—one to be taken

now and the other during the disabling and relaxing summer.

It is understood that the original purpose which the Church had in view in ordaining Lenten regulations not only had reference to religious duties, but to health considerations as well. It may, therefore, be found that in going to the seaside or country resort a good Christian may pass a more profitable, restful and invigorating Lenten season than if he were confined to more formal, more regular and more numerous religious duties at home.

## PUBLIC BUILDING "STEALS" AND "GRABS."

Recently THE CRITIC had occasion to take the New York World to task severely because it, in effect and without exception or qualification, denounced all public building bills as "steals." Whereupon the World whistled and pleaded the baby act. It says: "Our Washington contemporary misrepresents us."

Not at all. The World made a sweeping assertion, at once foolish and false and we so characterized it. While the World did not say in so many words that "all public building bills are steals," the language it did use admitted of no other construction or interpretation. Inasmuch as the Washington Postoffice bill was passed by the House on the day the World said was given up to "public building steals," and no exception was made in its favor, there was nothing left for a Washington paper to do, having its home interests at heart, as THE CRITIC has, except to characterize this paper as it deserved. We are glad the shaft was felt.

The New York Nation, the weekly edition of the New York Evening Post, refers to all Congressmen who introduce or vote for public building bills as "the public building grabbers," and calls the bills "building jobs."

It may appear surprising at first to find two papers, so far apart ordinarily in opinions and methods as the World and the Nation, giving tongue to the same asinine chorus. But a little consideration will convince anyone that both are, in this matter, impelled by the same underlying cause. The truth is that the New York press in general is stupidly provincial in thought. Its horizon does not extend across the North River nor beyond Sandy Hook. It is hopelessly narrow, constricted and bigoted. It seems to be utterly impossible for it to conceive, much less understand, that there are other cities in this country entitled to consideration quite as much as New York.

If there are any public building "steals" or "grabs," let the World and the Nation single them out for denunciation. And let them in turn label the "thieves" and "grabbers" upon the points of their too often pointless pens. To denounce, as they do, all public building bills as "steals" and "grabs" is no more effective than the crying of a child for the moon. And as an intellectual performance it is on the same level.

IN SOME OF THE cities of the country yesterday was observed as being the birthday of Andrew Jackson. There is much in what is known to us in regard to the personality and history of this American hero to impress the popular mind. He holds a conspicuous place in our military annals, and during an important period of the nation's life he so dominated its destinies that his political pre-eminence is now as assured as that which he gained as a soldier. The more numerous the heroes of the republic are found to be, the richer it finds itself; and the more fondly and reverently the memories of those heroes are cherished the more will the spirit of loyalty diffuse itself among our people. Certainly, among our great historic personages not one more directly commands the sympathy of a democratic people or more strongly appeals to its respect through the exhibition of the attributes of a sturdy manhood than the hero of New Orleans.

THE RUSH for the "Cherokee strip" was in no way justified by the passage of the Oklahoma bill in the House. The Cherokee land is now the subject of negotiations between the Indians and a commission appointed by the President. When these are ended this land will be transferred to the Government of the United States and opened regularly for settlement. Until then the President's proclamation is a warning against all warrantless intrusion.

THE TERRIBLE and invulnerable iron-clad has for years been the dread and menace of sea-board cities. This fear is measurably removed by the invention of the Zallinski pneumatic dynamite gun, which was tested last Thursday on the Delaware River, and which can be relied upon to land "a young volcano" one mile from the point of delivery. To this gun the blowing-up of an iron-clad would be simply a holiday pastime.

IT IS ANNOUNCED that New York capitalists are ready to establish a postal telegraph on the terms and rates proposed by the Postmaster-General. These capitalists are said to be owners of a system of telegraphy by which many circuits could be worked with few wires. All they ask in return is exemption from Federal and State taxation.

CONGRESSMAN FLOWER is quoted as authority for the statement that the New York Congressional delegation will support a River and Harbor bill of \$25,000,000 if New York is to get its due share. In this respect the New Yorkers are not sterner above all the other delegations in Congress.

"There are two members of the United States Senate with but one leg apiece," remarked Larkin. "When they were elected they didn't get there with both feet, then," replied Simms.—Yonah's News.

Oh, yes, they did. They were both elected.

IT IS ASCERTAINED that the pending negotiations in regard to the Behring Sea controversy are progressing as satisfactorily as the divergence of the views presented will permit.

IMMEDIATELY on the passage of the Oklahoma Territorial bill the "boomers" stamped for the "Cherokee Strip" and took possession of it with a rush.

## AMUSEMENTS.

"The Water Queen" at Albion's. It goes without saying that anything in the spectacular line produced under the management of Boleosy Kralffy is well worth seeing, he having a reputation on two continents as the king of the description of drama. "The Water Queen," which will be presented at Albion's this week, is regarded as the finest spectacle he has yet put before the public, and as it does in a lavish profusion of superb scenery, dazzling costumes, graceful groupings by hand and foot, and a variety of phases of the dance, excellent music and admirable specialties, Mr. Kralffy always commands the best talent and spurs no expense in the production of his dramas, he has most of producing this one is something enormous. The stage setting is said to be superb, the first transformation scene is something new, and the kind of it well witnessed.

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